

CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION
10 July 1985

Point of View.

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Secrecy and Democracy: the CIA and Academe

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Should colleges and their professors remain aloof from government's intelligence activities? Can they?

NOT LONG AFTER MY APPOINTMENT as Director of Central Intelligence in 1977, the chief of a foreign intelligence service gave me a bit of friendly advice: "You know, of course, you want to collect all the intelligence you can on home territory."

What he was alluding to was that journalists, professors, and businessmen, among others, are often in contact with their counterparts in other countries. Some professors have taught foreign students who now are in important positions in their native countries. International journalists keep in touch with key thinkers and politicians in countries where they've served. Many businessmen have frequent dealings with foreign businessmen. Although contacts of this kind aren't likely to have access to the inner secrets of the local Politburo or Cabinet, they will have an excellent feel for the state of the economy, the degree of societal unrest, or the prospects for incipient political movements.

My foreign colleague's logic, while irrefutable, ran exactly contrary to prevailing attitudes in the United States, particularly following the report in 1976 of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, chaired by Sen. Frank Church and known popularly as the Church Committee.

Without a doubt, the Church Committee investigations damaged the longstanding relationship the C.I.A. had with the academic community. The committee revealed that some professors had worked for the C.I.A. without informing their universities. We received letters from university presidents who wanted to know which professors had worked or were working for the C.I.A. But the C.I.A. had agreed with these professors that their relationship would be kept secret. If the professors chose to reveal their ties to the C.I.A., they were free to do so, but we could not and would not breach those agreements.

Next, a number of universities began drafting their own regulations to control future faculty relationships with the C.I.A. On March 25, 1977, I received word that Harvard was about to issue a set of guidelines that would greatly inhibit its faculty in associating with the C.I.A. I had already taken a number of steps to encourage better relations with the academic community and didn't want this prestigious university to set an example that would hamper my efforts. I called the president of Harvard, Derek Bok, and told him I would like to send someone to Cambridge to discuss this new regulation and explain how it would affect us. President Bok was very cordial and accepted my offer. An hour later he phoned back; the people who were writing the Har-

vard regulation had told him they had already contacted the C.I.A. and asked for the Agency's views. Much to my embarrassment, they had been told we would not comment. My enthusiasm for repairing relations with the academic world had obviously not permeated the C.I.A.'s bureaucracy. We did, however, finally have thorough discussions with Harvard. The regulation was modified, but Harvard still required its faculty to report all relationships with the C.I.A. Fortunately, very few other universities followed Harvard's example, and this did not become a continuing problem. Harvard also requested a complementing C.I.A. regulation forbidding any relationships with Harvard that were not disclosed; I refused to issue such a rule.

The reason I did not comply with Harvard's request was that I felt it was not reasonable to ask an academic to disclose only his relationships with the C.I.A. and ignore the relationships, formal and informal, he might have with corporations, foundations, or other government agencies. Any relationship can compromise a professor's objectivity and affect his teaching responsibilities, one with the C.I.A. no more or less than one with a business that pays him as a consultant. In the business world some of those relationships involve secret, proprietary matters; some require a division of loyalty, as with screening students to recommend whom a company should hire.

I could fully understand a university's insisting that its faculty members report all external, paid relationships. After all, a university has a right to know how much time its faculty members are spending on outside employment. I issued an instruction that before we engaged a professor whose university required disclosure of relationships with the C.I.A., we would remind him of his responsibilities to his university. If he insisted on not disclosing our relationship, that was between him and his university, not between the C.I.A. and the university. We could not and would not be the university's policeman. However, I did require that my approval be sought before we engaged an academic who refused to act in accordance with his university's rules. It was my practice to make a distinction between universities whose regulations required their people to report all outside relations and those which required the reporting only of a C.I.A. association. If the C.I.A. was singled out and an academic did not want to report his relationship, I would approve it. If all relationships had to be reported, I would not.

We did find professors who were insistent that they would work with us only if they did not have to disclose that they were doing so. Sometimes this was a matter of

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